Knowledge management in the public sector of emerging economies: a literature review

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Abstract: This study analyses knowledge management (KM) in the public sector of emerging economies, aiming to identify patterns, gaps, opportunities, and facilitators to strengthen KM practices through evidence-based recommendations. Using a systematic literature review of 23 articles with an integrative and theoretical-empirical approach, it finds that KM enhances innovation and institutional resilience by enabling adaptation to complex and changing contexts, positioning KM as a key strategic tool for improving efficiency. However, technological limitations and restrictive organisational cultures remain critical barriers that hinder knowledge retention and exchange, potentially leading to the loss of key personnel and reduced KM effectiveness. The study contributes originality by examining KM sharing strategies, barriers, maturity levels, retention outcomes, and innovation, emphasising the importance of achieving organisational maturity and identifying future research directions in KM within emerging economies.

Keywords: knowledge management; international best practices; knowledge sharing strategies; emerging economies; institutional barriers; organisational innovation.

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1   Introduction

In recent decades, KM has established itself as a strategic factor to improve the efficiency, innovation and responsiveness of organisations (Nonaka and Takeuchi, 1995; Davenport and Prusak, 1998; Alavi and Leidner, 2001). While much of the literature on KM has focused on the private sector and developed countries, research in the public sector is scarce, fragmented and with little theoretical development (Massaro et al., 2015; Serenko and Bontis, 2013). Therefore, there is a need to understand how knowledge is managed in the public sector, given that these organisations face particular challenges related to institutional structures in complex contexts, resource constraints, and bureaucratic processes that hinder the creation, retention, and effective application of knowledge (Choi and Chandler, 2015; Pepple et al., 2022; Tokyzhanova and Durst, 2024).

This article aims to analyse, through a literature review, the strategies, sharing, practices, barriers and results of KM in the public sector of emerging economies (Dikotla, 2021; Pandey, 2014; Lin et al., 2012; Dewah and Mutula, 2016; Alves et al., 2024). As well as identify common patterns, lessons learned and opportunities for improvement in the implementation of KM strategies in contexts with cultural and organisational challenges, and a growing need for innovation and resilience in public institutions (Dikotla, 2021; Chawla and Joshi, 2011; Lin et al., 2012; Dewah and Mutula, 2016; Oliveira and Guimarães, 2024; Goswami and Agrawal, 2022). KM is presented as a potential solution to address these challenges, promoting effective knowledge sharing, innovation and continuous improvement in decision-making (Dikotla, 2021; Oluikpe, 2012; May and Fombad, 2019; Chawla and Joshi, 2011; Oliveira and Guimarães, 2024; Alves et al., 2024).

The growth of emerging economies has highlighted the need for public institutions to adapt their processes to address cultural and organisational challenges (Goswami and Agrawal, 2022). KM is presented as a strategic solution that allows the integration and use of knowledge in decision-making (Tamta and Rao, 2017). Existing literature has shown that the implementation of knowledge strategies in the public sector can translate into greater operational efficiency and resilience to change (Mafabi et al., 2012). In this sense, various studies have identified successful practices in the retention and transfer of knowledge in complex contexts (Chawla and Joshi, 2011). Furthermore, the importance of aligning knowledge initiatives with organisational culture and institutional expectations has been demonstrated (Pillania, 2005). The review presented here is based on a compilation of literature that provides contrasting perspectives on the subject (Joshi el at., 2014). Likewise, the implications of digitalisation and the use of information technologies in KM in the public sector are explored (Chaudhuri and Banerjee, 2012). Therefore, it is proposed that a comprehensive understanding of these processes is essential to design strategies that respond to the dynamic needs of institutions (Dikotla, 2021).

1.1   Definition of the research problem

In emerging economies, KM in the public sector has gained relevance as a fundamental mechanism for improving efficiency, innovation and quality in the provision of public services (Dikotla, 2021; Dewah and Mutula, 2016). From a historical and regional perspective, Mundigo (1986) highlights that, since the 1980s, there was already a recognition of the need to use demographic knowledge in the formulation of public policies in Latin America. However, despite its importance, the effective implementation of KM in these institutions faces challenges ranging from cultural and technological barriers to the lack of well-defined organisational strategies (Lin et al., 2012; Marques et al., 2019).

Recent studies show that although some public organisations in emerging economies have adopted KM practices, there are important differences in their maturity and effectiveness (Chawla and Joshi, 2010; Kumar, 2021). For example, Alves et al. (2024) identified that, in public higher education institutions, concepts such as leadership, organisational culture and technological infrastructure directly influence the results of KM. Similarly, research in India and Africa emphasises that KM initiatives in the public sector are often hampered by a lack of organisational commitment and poor retention of relevant knowledge (Arora and Date, 2021; May and Fombad, 2019).

In Mexico, although rigid structures for accountability and efficiency have been prioritised over organisational learning and institutional flexibility for effective KM, this approach tends to relegate organisational learning and institutional flexibility, which limits the capacity of public entities to integrate, retain, and apply knowledge in dynamic contexts (Eakin et al., 2011). This view is similar in other emerging economies, where disparities in the adoption of KM practices limit value creation and informed decision-making (Oluikpe, 2012; Marques et al., 2019).

However, in addition to studies that highlight gaps and areas for improvement in KM, there is also research with a more proactive approach. For example, Parkkinen (2025) highlights the role of inclusive public leadership in coordinating knowledge networks in complex contexts, by promoting more collaborative and cross-cutting KM within the state apparatus. Along the same lines, Ongaro and Parker (2025) argue that project management can serve as a strategic means of strengthening KM in the public sector by providing temporary organisational structures that facilitate the generation, transfer, and institutionalisation of both tacit and explicit knowledge.

Therefore, it is pertinent to conduct a systematic review of the literature to identify patterns, gaps, opportunities, and facilitators related to KM in the public sector of emerging economies. This will enrich academic understanding of the subject and generate valuable inputs for the design of public policies and the development of more effective organisational strategies.

1.2   Research question and objectives

This review seeks to synthesise empirical and theoretical evidence, identify areas for improvement and propose courses of action for the application of best practices in KM in the public sector. The following objective is proposed: comprehensively analyse patterns, gaps, opportunities, and enablers of KM in public organisations in emerging economies, with the aim of proposing evidence-based recommendations to strengthen KM in emerging economic contexts, and the following research questions:

RQ1   What are the main facilitators that promote the effective application of KM in public organisations in emerging economies?

RQ2   What barriers do public organisations face when implementing KM practices, and how do these barriers affect their effectiveness?

RQ3   What results and benefits have been found in the literature regarding the implementation of KM in public organisations in emerging economies?

RQ4   What are the main knowledge gaps identified in the literature on KM in the public sector, and what opportunities do they represent for future research?

RQ5   What evidence-based recommendations can be made to strengthen KM in public organisations in countries with emerging economies?

1.3   Significance of the study

In this literature review, it is argued that KM in the public sector of emerging economies is configured as a strategic tool to overcome structural limitations and address cultural and organisational challenges (Oluikpe, 2012; Pillania, 2006).

Furthermore, it is argued that the implementation of these strategies fosters innovation and strengthens institutional resilience, allowing public organisations to adapt more effectively to dynamic and changing contexts (Dey and Mukhopadhyay, 2018). Likewise, it should also be noted that an ideal organisational culture promotes knowledge sharing and the integration of information technologies, which act as catalysts in the digital and operational transformation of public institutions (Goswami and Agrawal, 2022). On the other hand, the importance of ethical and committed leadership is emphasised, as it facilitates the implementation of policies that encourage collaboration and knowledge transfer between departments and areas (Tamta and Rao, 2017). The systematic adoption of KM strategies not only optimises operational efficiency and decision-making but also opens up opportunities to modernise and transform public administration in emerging economies (Oluikpe, 2012).

The first part of this article addresses the need for public institutions in emerging economies to overcome these limitations, which is presented as a context that demands transformation through KM (Pillania, 2006). Likewise, a theoretical framework is presented that highlights the importance of integrating knowledge strategies to promote innovation and institutional resilience, demonstrating how organisational culture and the use of information technologies can facilitate these processes (Dey and Mukhopadhyay, 2018). In the second part of this article, an analysis is made of the implementation of KM strategies in the public sector, emphasising the need for ethical and committed leadership that promotes collaboration and knowledge transfer (Goswami and Agrawal, 2022). In addition, the barriers and opportunities that arise in the practical application of these strategies are discussed, such as investment in information technologies and the willingness to share knowledge, creating fair organisational environments that promote involvement and collaboration among workers (Chaudhuri and Banerjee, 2012; Tamta and Rao, 2017; Tokyzhanova and Durst, 2024). Finally, the article concludes by pointing out some relevant directions for future research. Among these, it highlights the importance of developing KM models that are tailored to the institutional, cultural, and economic realities of countries with emerging economies. It also proposes further analysis of the interaction between information technologies and people in the public

environment, exploring how leadership characteristics influence the adoption, sustainability, and success of KM initiatives in public institutions, and examining which structures, processes, or incentives foster knowledge sharing between different areas or hierarchical levels within the same public sector organisation.

1.4 Conceptual model of the literature review

The relationship between the dimensions: KMSS, OBML, KMRR, KMPI, and the influence of OBML on KMSS and KMRR has been established to analyse the state of KM in the public sector of emerging economies through a literature review. To visualise these relationships, a conceptual model is proposed, represented in Figure 1. The aim is to understand the relationship between these dimensions and to draw lessons learned applicable to the context of countries with emerging economies.

Figure 1 Conceptual model of the literature review
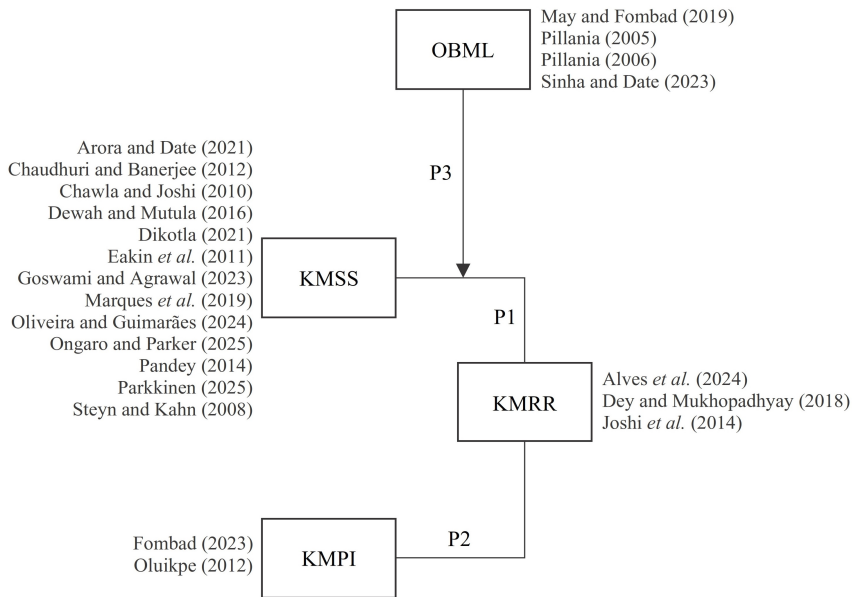
Note: Knowledge management and sharing strategies (KMSS), organisational barriers and maturity level (OBML), knowledge management retention and results (KMRR), and knowledge management practices and innovation (KMPI).

1.5 Propositions derived from the conceptual model of the literature review

Based on the interactions between the dimensions OBML, KMRR, KMPI, and the influence of OBML between KMSS and KMRR, the following propositions are formulated:

P1 Relationship between KMSS and KMRR: the KMSS improve KMRR in terms of efficiency and operational continuity (Pillania, 2006; Joshi el at., 2014; Oluikpe, 2012; Goswami and Agrawal, 2022; Chawla and Joshi, 2011; Dey and Mukhopadhyay, 2018).

P2   Relationship between KMPI and KMRR: the KMPI are still in an early phase of adoption, which has limited their impact on organisational innovation. This situation also influences the KMRR (Pillania, 2006; Dey and Mukhopadhyay, 2018; Chawla and Joshi, 2011; Joshi el at., 2014).

P3   Relationship between KMSS and KMRR influenced to OBML: the OBML can play a moderating role in the relationship between KMSS, and KMRR (Goswami and Agrawal, 2022; Pandey, 2014; Lin et al., 2012; Chaudhuri and Banerjee, 2012; Tamta and Rao, 2017), since organisations with higher levels of maturity, by having structures, processes and cultures more conducive to the use of knowledge, enhance their operational and strategic performance (Goswami and Agrawal, 2022).

Therefore, organisational maturity and overcoming internal barriers are important for successful knowledge management (KM). Firstly, greater organisational maturity, accompanied by the reduction of structural and cultural barriers, facilitates the implementation of effective KMSS, as argued by Gold et al. (2001) and McAdam and Reid (2000). These strategies, in turn, act as catalysts for the development of innovative practices in KM, generating deeper and more sustainable organisational learning (Alavi and Leidner, 2001; Choi and Lee, 2002). Finally, organisational maturity also has a direct impact on the organisation's ability to retain knowledge and generate a sustained competitive advantage, as highlighted by Davenport and Prusak (1998) and Grant (1996).

2   Method

2.1   Type of research design chosen and justification

A literature review of integrative typology was carried out with a theoretical-empirical approach and a systematised methodology, which focuses on integrating and synthesising both theoretical and empirical studies to generate new perspectives, conceptual frameworks or theories (Whittemore and Knafl, 2005; Torraco, 2005), with the purpose of understanding the relationship between the dimensions KMSS, OBML, KMRR, KMPI, and the influence of OBML between KMSS and KMRR. This typology is broader and more flexible than the systematic review, as it combines different sources and types of evidence, and can include theoretical articles, case studies, quantitative and qualitative research, conceptual models, and practical experiences (Whittemore and Knafl, 2005). This systematised approach aims to identify the main trends and currents in an area, as well as the detection of research gaps and opportunities (Masot and Selva-Pareja, 2020), which will allow for a better understanding of the studies reviewed that address one or more dimensions of this article, with the aim of compiling lessons learned that may be useful and adaptable to other contexts in countries with emerging economies.

2.2   Literature review methodology

Considering an integrative literature review (Whittemore and Knafl, 2005), the study proposes the following protocol:

1   define the study objectives and research questions

2   define the keywords and dimensions of the study

3   determine the search criteria based on the defined dimensions

4   select studies published in indexed journals on GC from developed countries and emerging economies applicable to the public sector of emerging economies for analysis

5   organise and prioritise articles where one or more of the dimensions of the study topic are included

6   select articles based on the abstract, findings, and conclusions that contain patterns, themes, or concepts to determine the conceptual model

7   suggest propositions based on the relationships between the dimensions proposed in the conceptual model

8   propose answers to the research questions and the fulfilment of the proposed objective

9   determine gaps in the literature and related topics for future research

10 propose conclusions and recommendations for their timely forecasting and application in public sector organisations in emerging economies.

2.3   Search criteria and duplicate removal

Once the research question and objectives have been defined, the parameters for the literature review are determined in Table 1. After defining the search query for WoS and Scopus, the corresponding parameters and filters were applied. Regarding the selection of countries with emerging economies, studies were considered from countries with the fastest PBI growth projected in 2025 compared to 2024, which were: Argentina, Colombia, Peru, India, the Philippines, Thailand, Vietnam, Hungary, Poland, Saudi Arabia, and South Africa (S&P Global Ratings, 2024); furthermore, based on information obtained from the International Monetary Fund (2024), sub-Saharan African countries, Brazil, Nigeria, Romania, and Mexico are also considered. Articles that have not been peer-reviewed, developed countries, and those without an organisational focus are excluded.

Table 1   Literature review parameters

Parameter	*Description*
Language	English and Spanish
Time range	1980–2025
Database	WoS and Scopus
Type of articles	Empirical, conceptual, and literature review articles from indexed journals.
Reference	Governmental, organisational, industrial, technological, commercial, educational.
Keywords	Knowledge management, international best practices, knowledge retention, knowledge sharing strategies, emerging economies, institutional barriers, organisational innovation.

Table 2   Literature review table by dimension

Author	Year	Title	Journal	Editorial	IF	Quartile	Dimension
Alves, J.N., Cogo, M.P., Klein, L.L. and Pereira, B.A.D.	2024	Knowledge management drivers and its results: a quantitative study in a public higher education institution	*Business Process Management Journal*	Emerald Publishing	4.5	Q1	RRKM
Arora, R.K. and Date, H.	2021	Knowledge management practices in the Indian steel industry: a comprehensive analysis of public sector units	*Journal of Information and Knowledge Management*	World Scientific	0.9	Q3	EKMS
Chaudhuri, M. and Banerjee, P.	2012	Orientation of MMTC employees towards knowledge management and learning organization	*International Journal of Business Performance Management*	Inderscience Publishers	0.8	Q4	EKMS
Chawla, D. and Joshi, H.	2010	Knowledge management initiatives in Indian public and private sector organizations	*Journal of Knowledge Management*	Emerald Publishing	6.6	Q1	EKMS
Chawla, D. and Joshi, H.	2011	A comparative study of knowledge management assessment in business excellence awarded and non-awarded organizations in India	*Journal of Knowledge Management*	Emerald Publishing	6.6	Q1	EKMS
Dewah, P. and Mutula, S.M.	2016	Knowledge retention strategies in public sector organizations: Current status in sub-Saharan Africa	*Information Development*	SAGE Publications	2	Q2	EKMS
Dey, T. and Mukhopadhyay, S.	2018	Linkage between contextual factors, knowledge-sharing mediums, and behaviour	*Knowledge and Process Management*	Wiley	7.1	Q2	RRKM
Dikotla, M.A.	2021	Remodelling public sector knowledge management system using key knowledge management processes	*Collection and Curation*	Emerald Publishing	0.6 1	Q1	EKMS
Eakin, H., Eriksen, S., Eikeland, P-O. and Øyen, C.	2011	Public sector reform and governance for adaptation: Implications of new public management for adaptive capacity in Mexico and Norway	*Environmental Management*	Springer	3	Q1	EKMS
Fombad, M.C.	2023	Reexamining knowledge management education in higher institutions of learning in Africa: a South African perspective	*Library Trends*	Johns Hopkins University Press	0.3	Q3	PIKM
Goswami, A.K. and Agrawal, R.K.	2023	It's a knowledge centric world! Does ethical leadership promote knowledge sharing and knowledge creation? Psychological capital as mediator and shared goals as moderator	*Journal of Knowledge Management*	Emerald Publishing	6.6	Q1	EKMS
Joshi, H., Chawla, D. and Farooquie, J.A.	2014	Segmenting knowledge management (KM) practitioners and its relationship to performance variation – some empirical evidence	*Journal of Knowledge Management*	Emerald Publishing	6.6	Q1	RRKM

Table 2 Literature review table by dimension (continued)

| Author	Year	Title	Journal	Editorial	IF	Quartile	Dimension
Marques, J.M.R., La Falce, J.L., Marques, F.M.F.R., De Muylder, C.F. and Silva, J.T.M.	2019	The relationship between organizational commitment, knowledge transfer and knowledge management maturity	*Journal of Knowledge Management*	Emerald Publishing	6.6	Q1	EKMS
May, B.L. and Fombad, M.	2019	Knowledge sharing at the Overstrand Municipality in Western Cape Hermanus, South Africa	*Libri - International Journal of Libraries and Information Studies*	De Gruyter	0.8	Q2	BLMO
Oliveira, L.F. and Guimarães, T.A.	2024	Factors associated with innovation capacity in courts	*Brazilian Administration Review*	ANPAD (Brazil)	0.3	Q3	EKMS
Oluikpe, P.	2012	Developing a corporate knowledge management strategy	*Journal of Knowledge Management*	Emerald Publishing	6.6	Q1	PIKM
Ongaro, E. and Parker, S.	2025	The contribution of project management to public management: Developing conceptual linkages	*International Journal of Public Sector Management*	Emerald Publishing	2.5	Q1	EKMS
Pandey, K.N.	2014	Knowledge management processes: a case study of NTPC and POWERGRID	*Global Business Review*	Sage Publications	2.3	Q2	EKMS
Parkkinen, J.	2025	Integrative public leadership: a systematic review	*International Journal of Public Sector Management*	Emerald Publishing	2.5	Q1	EKMS
Pillania, R.K.	2005	Leveraging knowledge: Indian industry's expectations and shortcomings	*Global Business Review*	Sage Publications	2.3	Q2	BLMO
Pillania, R.K.	2006	State of organizational culture for knowledge management in Indian industry	*Global Business Review*	Sage Publications	2.3	Q2	BLMO
Sinha, S. and Date, H.	2013	A meta-synthesis of knowledge management maturity models: identifying common denominators	*Journal of Knowledge Management*	Emerald Publishing	6.6	Q1	BLMO
Steyn, C. and Kahn, M.	2008	Towards the development of a knowledge management practices survey for application in knowledge-intensive organizations	*South African Journal of Business Management*	AOSIS	0.9	Q3	EKMS

3   Results

3.1   Data analysis of the articles

After having applied the process and parameters for the literature review for the present research study, the literature identified for analysis is shown in Table 2.

3.2   Publications by country

The dimensions defined, based on the process and parameters for the literature review, and the criteria specified in emerging economies, are India, South Africa, and Brazil at the top of the list; however, no publications on the subject of study have been found in Argentina, Colombia, Peru, the Philippines, Thailand, Vietnam, Hungary, Poland, and Saudi Arabia (see Figure 2).

**Figure 2**   Publications by country
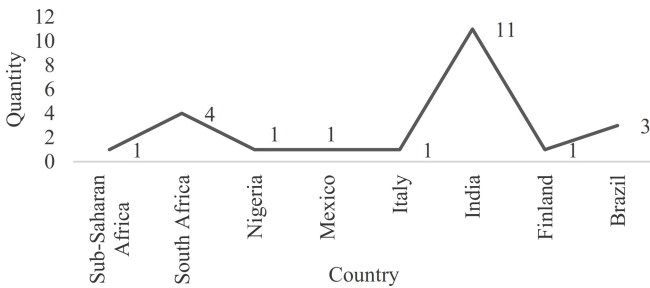
Italy and Finland are not part of the emerging economies. They correspond to literature on KM in developed countries applicable to the public sector in emerging economies for analysis.

3.3   Publications by year

The dimensions defined, based on the process and parameters for reviewing the literature, and the criteria specified in emerging economies, showed a trend of publications per year ranging from a maximum of two (see Figure 3).

3.4   Publications by dimensions

Of the dimensions defined, based on the process and parameters for the literature review, and the criteria specified in emerging economies, the dimension with the highest percentage of publications is KMSS. However, the dimension with the lowest percentage of publications is KMPI (see Figure 4).

Figure 3   Publications by year
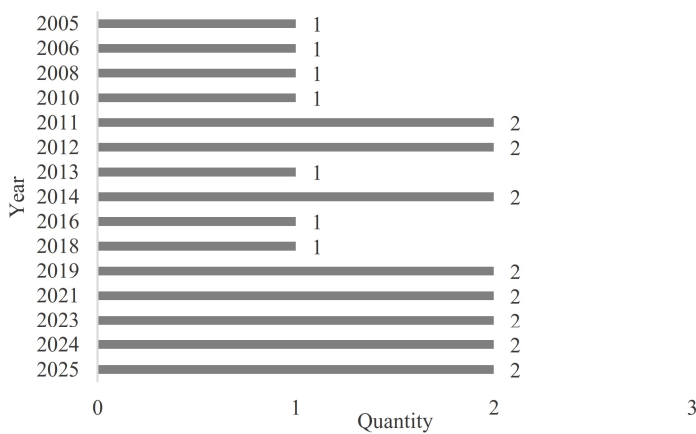
Figure 4   Publications by dimensions
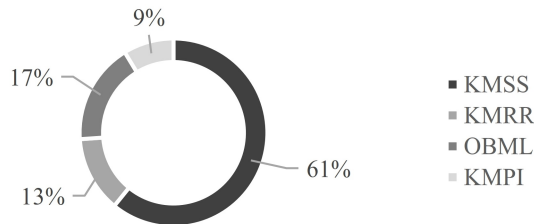
Note: Knowledge management and sharing strategies (KMSS), organisational barriers
    and maturity level (OBML), knowledge management retention and results
    (KMRR), and knowledge management practices and innovation (KMPI).

3.5   Publications by journal

The journals with the most publications, based on the literature review process and
parameters, and the criteria specified in emerging economies, are: *Information
Development*, and *Libri – International Journal of Libraries and Information Studies*. A
trend toward only one publication per journal is also observed (see Figure 5).

3.6   Journals by impact factor

The journals with the highest impact factors, based on the criteria specified for data
analysis, are: *Knowledge and Process Management*, and *Journal of Knowledge
Management*. The journals with the lowest impact factor are: *Brazilian Administration
Review*, and *Library Trends* (see Figure 6).

3.7   Method used in the publications

Regarding the methods used in the publications, the following approaches were
identified:

1   quantitative research, using structured surveys, linear regression analysis and comparative analysis

2   theoretical essays, based on conceptual analysis without empirical work

3   literature reviews, with conceptual, systematic or systematised approaches

4   qualitative research, through case studies, documentary review and interviews.

However, some researchers did not explicitly specify the method used, which suggests a dependence on theoretical frameworks and conceptual analysis as the main basis of their proposals.
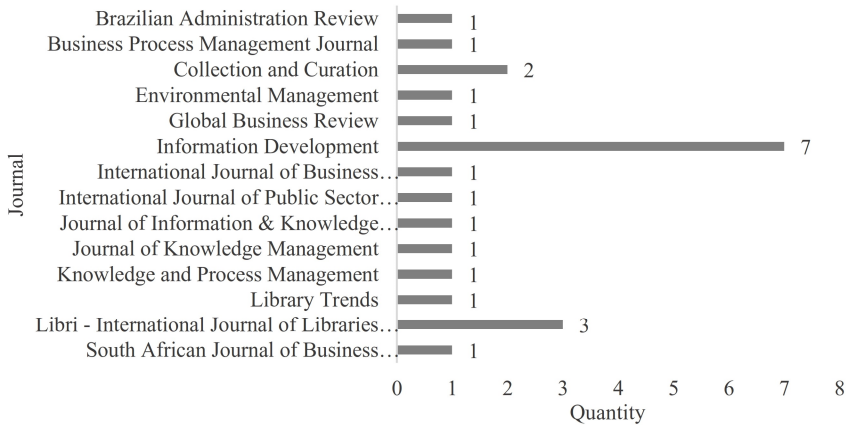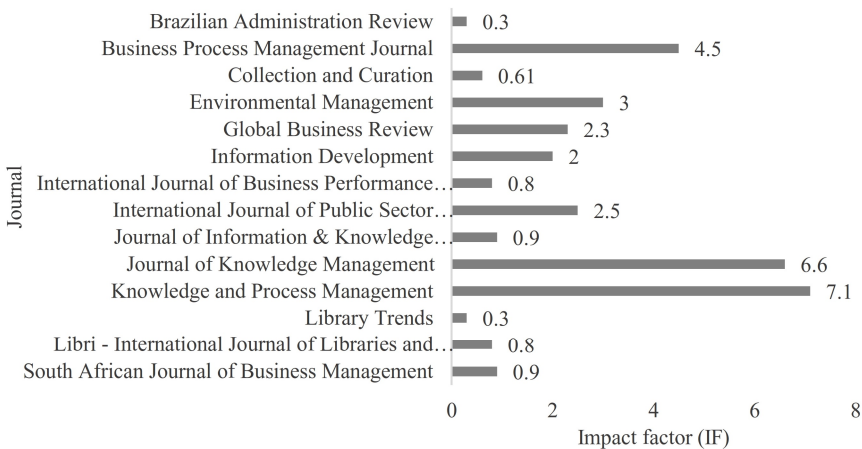
Figure 5   Publications by journal

Figure 6   Journals by impact factor (IF)

3.8 Literature review analysis

3.8.1 KM and sharing strategies

KM strategies

They are the set of plans and methodologies that guide the adoption and development of knowledge practices in organisations (Oluikpe, 2012). A successful strategy involves the design of comprehensive frameworks that align institutional objectives with the implementation of KM processes, establishing clear mechanisms for the identification, acquisition and dissemination of relevant information (Pandey, 2014). Arora and Date (2021) proposed a hybrid strategy that combines people-centred processes with the use of information technology, emphasising that effective management requires both technical infrastructure and motivation to share knowledge. Similarly, Ongaro and Parker (2025) integrate project management logic into strategic planning in the public sector in their model of the public strategic planning and management cycle, which promotes more flexible, adaptive, and learning-oriented organisational environments. In addition, the definition of incentive policies and the promotion of ethical and committed leadership are fundamental components that ensure the active participation of employees in the KM process (Goswami and Agrawal, 2022), which leads to integrative leadership that improves the interconnection between structures, processes, and participants (Parkkinen, 2025).

Knowledge sharing strategies

These correspond to the creation of environments and platforms that facilitate the exchange of information and experiences between collaborators, both formally and informally (Dey and Mukhopadhyay, 2018). The implementation of communities of practice and the use of information technologies have proven to be effective tools for promoting collaboration and knowledge dissemination in the public sphere (Chaudhuri and Banerjee, 2012). According to Oliveira and Guimarães (2024), effective strategies must be tailored to the organisational context and promote both the storage and dynamic transfer of tacit and explicit knowledge. In turn, Chawla and Joshi (2010), in their development of empirical models for public organisations, emphasise that knowledge sharing is favoured by horizontal structures, committed leadership, and an environment of trust, as these strategies allow knowledge to flow throughout the organisation, promoting a culture of continuous learning and contributing to the generation of new ideas and innovative solutions (Goswami and Agrawal, 2022; Pandey, 2014). This aligns with the findings of Dewah and Mutula (2016) and Dikotla (2021) in public sector contexts, who observe that the success of KM strategies depends largely on the creation of clear institutional policies, incentives for knowledge sharing, and leadership that supports these initiatives. Finally, Steyn and Kahn (2008) emphasise that the sustainability of KM lies in its institutionalisation, as strategies must be aligned with organisational objectives and form part of strategic planning processes so that knowledge is not only shared but also used strategically.

3.8.2 Barriers and organisational maturity level

Institutional barriers

They represent one of the main challenges to the effective implementation of KM, as aspects such as resistance to change, rigid hierarchical structures, and a lack of incentives to share information limit the dynamics of exchange (Pillania, 2005). The existence of an uncollaborative organisational culture, along with the absence of policies that recognise and reward knowledge transfer, can inhibit the flow of information, affecting the institutional capacity to innovate and adapt (Chawla and Joshi, 2011). Along the same lines, May and Fombad (2019) warn that many public institutions face persistent obstacles due to the lack of clear regulatory frameworks, poor technological infrastructure and the poor prioritisation of KM within their strategic agendas. For his part, Pillania (2005, 2006) identifies barriers related to organisational culture, leadership and resistance to change, highlighting that many organisations in emerging economies fail to integrate KM into their core processes due to a lack of a clear strategic vision. This lack generates fragmented or merely symbolic initiatives that fail to consolidate or endure over time. Finally, Sinha and Date (2013) highlighted that the lack of alignment between organisational strategy and KM initiatives leads to a duplication of efforts and the consequent loss of key knowledge. Furthermore, they point out that low institutional maturity constitutes a critical barrier, as it prevents the implementation of formal structures, roles, and processes necessary for effective and sustainable KM. Consequently, barriers such as mistrust between departments, excessive bureaucracy, and institutional inertia prevent the adoption of practices that facilitate knowledge retention and sharing (Dewah and Mutula, 2016). These barriers require specific strategies that include restructuring internal processes, strengthening leadership, and implementing incentives that promote a cultural shift toward collaboration and continuous learning (Steyn and Kahn, 2008).

Organisational maturity level

A mature organisation in KM is considered to be one that has institutionalised processes and tools that facilitate the capture, transfer and application of knowledge, such as Sinha and Date (2013), who suggest that, to achieve maturity in KM, an approach is required that covers both technologies and strategic and human dimensions. In this regard, effective KM does not depend solely on technology, but requires a combination of specific organisational capabilities (Marques et al., 2019). According to Joshi et al. (2014), the attitudes, behaviours and perceptions of professionals are linked to variations in organisational performance, since by identifying different groups or clusters with differentiated profiles in terms of attitudes towards KM, the use of KM tools, and their integration with organisational processes, the result was that the segment most committed to formal and structured KM practices tended to report higher levels of organisational performance. Therefore, the practices of KM professionals directly influence the results obtained by the organisation (Joshi el at., 2014).

3.8.3 KM retention and results

Knowledge retention

It is a critical component of organisational management, as it ensures the preservation of accumulated knowledge and operational continuity in the face of structural changes or loss of key personnel. According to Alves et al. (2024), retention should not be seen solely as the storage of information, but as the ability of organisations to integrate that knowledge into processes, people, and structures, allowing it to remain active and useful over time. In this regard, Dey and Mukhopadhyay (2018) point out that the effectiveness of strategies for preserving knowledge depends on the proper alignment between contextual factors and the means used for its exchange. Informal means, such as face-to-face interactions and internal networks, enhance the transfer of tacit knowledge, while formal means, such as databases and intranets, are more effective for explicit knowledge. In addition, intrinsic motivation is identified as a more powerful driver for knowledge sharing than monetary incentives. For their part, Joshi et al. (2014) emphasise that knowledge retention-oriented practices are directly related to organisational culture and leadership commitment. In their study, they identified that companies that foster a collaborative and continuous learning culture are more likely to implement structured mechanisms for knowledge retention, such as databases, communities of practice and systematic documentation.

KM results

It generates tangible and intangible benefits that translate into improved organisational performance, innovation capacity, operational efficiency, and continuous learning. According to Alves et al. (2024), in their empirical study, the results of effective KM are manifested in greater maturity in project management, since organisations manage to capitalise on their previous experience and apply good practices systematically. For their part, Dey and Mukhopadhyay (2018) provide evidence that KM results improve when there is consistency between the organisational context, the medium of exchange, and the type of knowledge managed. The greater an organisation's ability to analyse, interpret, and apply strategic data, the greater its results in terms of informed decision-making, knowledge sustainability, and competitive advantage, since the results of implementing KM practices include improved productivity, greater problem-solving capacity, and a strengthening of the organisational culture based on learning (Dey and Mukhopadhyay, 2018; Joshi el at., 2014).

3.8.4 Practices and innovation in KM

KM practices

KM practices include the implementation of systems and mechanisms for the capture, organisation and dissemination of knowledge within institutions (Pillania, 2006). Each organisation adopts specific practices that can range from the creation of communities of practice and collaborative platforms to the use of information technologies that facilitate the exchange of experiences and learning (Dey and Mukhopadhyay, 2018), since the incorporation of continuous training initiatives and mentoring programs has proven essential to foster the culture of knowledge and enhance the transfer of knowledge between employees (Chawla and Joshi, 2011). In the context of public sector institutions,

the implementation of effective KM practices requires an integration between knowledge governance policies, the strategic use of information technologies and staff empowerment (Fombad, 2023). Likewise, the documentation and systematisation of internal processes are established as essential practices to guarantee the retention and reuse of knowledge in scenarios of high staff turnover or organisational changes (Joshi el at., 2014), since KM practices are a transforming element in institutional environments where knowledge is distributed in a fragmented manner (Oluikpe, 2012). These practices, together, seek to transform information into strategic assets that promote efficiency and innovation within public institutions (Pillania, 2006).

Organisational innovation in KM

It is the organisation's ability to integrate, reinterpret, and apply existing knowledge in new ways, thereby driving change and improvement in processes, products, or structures (Alavi and Leidner, 2001). In addition, the role of knowledge management systems (KMS) as enablers of innovation is emphasised, as they facilitate collaboration, the collective creation of knowledge and its reuse in different contexts. According to Fombad (2023), public organisations that integrate KM approaches as part of their institutional structures manage not only to improve operational efficiency, but also to promote innovation in services, processes and policies. Its study in the context of the public sector shows how the systematisation of tacit and explicit knowledge, through collaborative digital platforms, strengthens the institutional capacity to generate new solutions and practices adapted to complex environments. For his part, Oluikpe (2012) argues that KM is not just an information storage tool, but a dynamic mechanism that enhances innovation through the creation of new knowledge and its effective application, since innovation arises when knowledge flows without friction between hierarchical levels, which requires a favourable organisational culture, committed leadership and enabling technologies.

4   Discussion

4.1   Gaps found in the literature

The search revealed the following gaps in the literature:

1   Few empirical studies in emerging economies. Most research on KM comes from developed countries, and there is a lack of empirical evidence on how KM processes are implemented and adapted in public institutions in emerging economies (May and Fombad, 2019; Pepple et al., 2022).

2   Weak relationship between KM and institutional performance outcomes. Although it is recognised that KM can improve the efficiency of the public sector, there are few studies that demonstrate causal relationships between KM practices and improved results (Marques et al., 2019; Lee and Choi, 2003).

3   Lack of models adapted to the institutional reality of the public sector. There are conceptual frameworks and KM maturity models that are based on the private sector and do not capture the institutional complexity of the public sector, in addition to

which there is insufficient development of models tailored to the needs of state entities in emerging economies (Massaro et al., 2015; Sinha and Date, 2013).

4   Limited focus on technology as a facilitator. The literature on technology for KM, such as portals and lessons learned systems, does not consider budgetary constraints (Alavi and Leidner, 2001; Lin et al., 2012).

5   Little integration between KM and public policy. There is a lack of analysis on how the knowledge generated within public entities contributes to the evaluation of implemented policies, which reduces the strategic potential of KM for decision-making (Ongaro and Parker, 2025; Eakin et al., 2011).

6   Little attention to successful experiences in emerging economies. Good practices, lessons learned, and successful cases of KM implementation in the public sector in Latin American countries, South Africa, and India are not sufficiently documented or systematised (May and Fombad, 2019; Pepple et al., 2022).

4.2   Future research on km in emerging economies

To investigate how the adoption of disruptive technologies such as big data and blockchain can enhance knowledge retention and sharing processes in the public sector, considering the interaction between these technologies and organisational culture (Chaudhuri and Banerjee, 2012; Goswami and Agrawal, 2022). Likewise, it is necessary to conduct longitudinal studies that allow evaluating the evolution and impact of KM practices over time in public institutions in emerging economies, which could provide empirical evidence on the effectiveness of these practices and their relationship with organisational innovation (Pandey, 2014; Dey and Mukhopadhyay, 2018).

A promising line of research is the comparison between the implementation of KM in the public and private sectors in emerging economies, which would facilitate the identification of best practices, specific barriers and opportunities for improvement in each context (Chawla and Joshi, 2010; Kumar, 2021). To deepen the analysis of the cultural and organisational barriers that hinder the dissemination and use of knowledge, as well as the design of effective strategies to overcome them, considering contextual differences and resistance to change in institutions (Pillania, 2006; Dewah and Mutula, 2016; Tokyzhanova and Durst, 2024).

Another area of research is the role of ethical and committed leadership in promoting a KM culture, especially in how this leadership influences the generation of innovations and the creation of collaborative environments (Goswami and Agrawal, 2022; Tamta and Rao, 2017). To investigate how public policies and regulatory frameworks can encourage or limit the implementation of KM strategies in the public sector, allowing for the establishment of recommendations for designing more effective policies in the context of emerging economies (Dikotla, 2021; Oliveira and Guimarães, 2024).

Finally, it would be beneficial to develop and validate theoretical models that integrate technological, human and structural factors in KM, and that explain the relationship between KM and organisational innovation in contexts of limited resources and high uncertainty (Oluikpe, 2012; Pandey, 2014).

5 Conclusions and recommendations

This literature review article concludes that there is evidence that KM is a comprehensive solution for addressing resource constraints and cultural and organisational challenges in the public sector of emerging economies (Oluikpe, 2012; Pillania, 2006), as the implementation of knowledge strategies strengthens the innovative capacity and resilience of institutions, enabling them to adapt to changing and complex contexts (Pandey, 2014). The existence of successful practices in various scenarios suggests that the integration of information technologies and a knowledge-oriented organisational culture are decisive factors in the success of these initiatives (Chaudhuri and Banerjee, 2012; Goswami and Agrawal, 2022; Georgescu and Georgescu, 2008). The review also highlights the importance of developing ethical and committed leaders, as well as the need to develop frameworks that promote knowledge sharing and interdepartmental collaboration (Chawla and Joshi, 2011). The identification of common patterns and lessons learned allows for the proposal of recommendations that contribute to continuous improvement in KM, driving a cultural transformation in public institutions (Goswami and Agrawal, 2022). Finally, it is suggested that future research delve deeper into the analysis of the interaction between technology and people, as well as into the development of specific models for emerging contexts (Oluikpe, 2012; Pandey, 2014).

Therefore, it is recommended to develop and validate KM models designed for the institutional, cultural, and economic realities of countries with emerging economies, considering their structural limitations and contextual opportunities. Furthermore, future research should focus on understanding how information technologies interact with people to promote management, organisational culture, and staff motivation, with the aim of creating environments conducive to KM. In addition, to investigate how leadership characteristics influence the adoption, sustainability and success of KM initiatives, with emphasis on leaders who promote ethics, collaboration and innovation in the public sector, together with examining how different types of organisational culture facilitate or hinder the processes of creation, transfer and application of knowledge in public entities. Finally, it is suggested to analyse which structures, processes, or incentives can promote knowledge exchange between areas or levels within the same public institution, as well as to empirically measure how the implementation of KM strategies contributes to improving the innovation, adaptation, and sustainability capacity of public institutions.

Declarations

All authors declare that they have no conflicts of interest.

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